

Notes from the President

Exploring Innovation Frontiers

06/10/2015

Leaders from industry, the community, national laboratories, the government and higher education came together at Tech Square on June 9 for the first in a series of five dialogues around the nation as part of the Exploring Innovation Frontiers Initiative (EIFI). With the support of the National Science Foundation, the event was hosted by the Council on Competitiveness, the Georgia Research Alliance, the Metro Atlanta Chamber and Georgia Tech.

EIFI is a national public-private effort to accelerate the over-the-horizon, transformative innovation models that will drive U.S. competitiveness in the coming decades. In her keynote, NSF Director Dr. France Córdova talked about the rapid changes in societal and innovation landscapes, and said that new collaborations can lead to the development of new innovation ecosystems throughout the country.

Dr. Córdova touched on the range of programs that NSF sponsors to help energize the nation's innovation ecosystem, including Innovation Corps, or I-Corps. Georgia Tech is one of the founding nodes of I-Corps, which brings together the technological, entrepreneurial and business know-how to get innovation from labs to market. The program has countless success stories at Georgia Tech and throughout the country.

Through panel discussions and work sessions, we looked at untapped innovation capacity and diversity, focused on nurturing new talent and new ideas, and explored ways to create new markets, new jobs and grow the economy.

Providing a fresh perspective were three next generation innovators: Jasmine Burton, a recent Georgia Tech graduate and founder and president of Wish for WASH, LLC; current student Rachel Ford, cofounder of two companies and an instructor in the Georgia Tech Venture Lab; and former Georgia Tech student Partha Unnava, CEO of Better Walk Inc.

We are grateful to Hala Modellmog, president and CEO of the Metro Atlanta Chamber, for serving in a leadership role, along with leaders from the CDC, GE, Lockheed Martin, the Boeing Company, the City of Atlanta, universities, national laboratories, and many others. Also participating was Georgia Tech President Emeritus G. Wayne Clough. It is interesting to note that a little over a decade ago, he co-led the National Innovation Initiative launched by the Council on Competitiveness.

As stated on the Council on Competitiveness website, pillars of innovation identified then - talent, investment and infrastructure - remain just as relevant to the underpinnings of America's innovation capacity today. Georgia Tech was privileged to host the first Exploring Innovation Frontiers Initiative dialogue. We are committed to accelerating transformative innovation to drive America's competitiveness.

G. P. "Bud" Peterson
President, Georgia Tech